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AUTHOR Loney, Brian D.
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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine the effects of race and sex on performance on selected affective exercises from the first social studies assessment conducted in 1971-72 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Compared were the performances of black males versus other males, black females versus other females, black males versus black females, and other males versus other females. The attitude exercises measured attitudes concerning two topics. The first topic concentrated on commitment to rights guaranteed in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The second topic dealt with the concept of commitment to the worth of the individual. Results show that females performed better than males at all levels except the young adult, and blacks were consistently outperformed by others at all levels. Based on these results the study concluded that performance on some of the NAEP affective exercises was influenced by the sex and race of the respondent; the overall effects of race appeared to be greater than the overall effect of sex; and NAEP's sampling procedure has failed to provide the types of information needed to fully assess learning and attitudes in a pluralistic society. (Author/RM)

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NAEP, Race, Sex and Political Attitudes

A Paper Presented
at the
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Brian D. Loney
Faribault Public Schools
Faribault, Minnesota

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Introduction

National Assessment was established in the 1960s partly as a result of the increasing criticisms regarding American education and its effectiveness. Expenditures for education in the United States continued to climb, while increasingly, evidence seemed to point to an overall decline in performance. Although there were, and are, many possible explanations for this phenomenon, education as an institution came under increasing attack from many directions. Existing measures of educational quality tended to focus on input factors such as class size and per-pupil expenditures and assumed that with an increase in the quality of inputs into the educational system, educational outcomes would also increase. There was little factual evidence that existed to prove this assumption.

As a result of work of several committees, a decision was made to periodically assess knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes in ten learning areas. The learning areas to be assessed were art, career and occupational development, citizenship, literature, mathematics, music, reading, science, social studies, and writing. These were to be assessed at four age levels (9, 13, 17, and young adults--26-35) (NAEP, 1974, p.1). These ages were selected as representing the times when people reach educational milestones in the American educational system.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to examine the effects of race and sex on performance on selected affective exercises from the first social studies assessment conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. NAEP, established in the 1960s, has conducted assessments in 10 learning areas in order to assess changes in knowledge, understandings, skills, and attitudes relating to major goals of American education. The first social studies assessment was conducted in 1971-1972.

NAEP results have traditionally been reported on the basis of major categories such as age, region, race, sex, level of parental education, and size and type of community. Categories have not, for the most part, been crossed so as to look at the performance of various subgroups such as black males, other males, black females and other females. This study was designed to compare the performance of black males versus other males, black females versus other females, black males versus black females, and other males versus other females on the affective exercises used by NAEP in the first social studies assessment.

Political Socialization Theory

Societal concern about the processes of passing on and maintaining the existing political system is not new, even though the field of study known as political socialization is relatively young. Such concern can be traced in the writings of early political

philosophers such as Plato and can also be seen in the works of Machiavelli, Rousseau and others.

Prior to 1966, the major subgroup differences within the larger population that were studies by those interested in political socialization were those of sex and social class. After 1966, however, a new area of research emerged focusing on race and specifically on the political socialization of Black Americans. Stemming partially from the major efforts of blacks to gain civil rights and the increasingly militant stance of many blacks, researchers began to examine more carefully the political attitudes and behavior of blacks as a group. Increasingly, research focused on attempts to measure political efficacy and political trust among blacks as compared to whites and to measure black political participation as compared to white.

In general, studies of this sort revealed major differences between blacks and whites. They also indicated the presence of shifts in black attitudes toward the government. Several different explanations emerged to explain the differences between black political attitudes and behavior and to explain the shifts that seemed to be occurring. The major theories focused on the political socialization of blacks.

Abramson (1977) has done the most extensive work summarizing and synthesizing the research to date. He found that, on the whole, black children tended to have lower feelings of political efficacy and lower feelings of political trust than white children did. In

surveying the research, he has identified four major explanations: 1) political education, 2) social deprivation, 3) intelligence, and 4) political reality.

Like the research done on race and political socialization, the research on sex and political socialization tends frequently to be contradictory. Although there is some agreement among researchers that differences in patterns of political attitudes and political behavior exist between the sexes, thereis little consensus as to the cause of the differences. Research has traditionally shown differences in political participationand political attitudes between men and women. Overall, women tend to participate less frequently than men in political activities. This includes the actual act of voting as well as other forms of political activity. Attitudinally, it has been claimed that women are more candidate oriented and less issue oriented than men, that women are less likely to support policies that they view as aggressive. In addition, women have been found to express fewer political opinions and have been found, as a group, to have a lower sense of political efficacy (Campbell, 1960).

It is when researchers attempt to explain the causes of these differences that divergent schools of thought emerge. Generally, three explanations hvae been identified with respect to the political differences between the sexes. They are 1) the political socialization explanation, 2) the situational explanation, and 3) the structural explanation. While each of these has its advocates, few would deny that each has some credibility.

Summary of NAEP Attitude Findings

The attitude assessment conducted by NAEP consisted of exercises designed to measure attitudes concerning two topics. The first topic concentrated on commitment to rights guaranteed in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. In this topic, respondents were required "... to make value judgements about a variety of situations, in which the freedoms of speech press, religion, petition, and assembly are involved." (NAEP, 1975a, p. 669). The second topic dealt with the concept of commitment to the worth of the individual and included exercises dealing with

> attitudes toward participation in school and the community sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others, belief in the rule of law, and respect for the views of others (NAEP, 1975, p. 669).

Most of the exercises were designed to measure NAEP Social Studies Objective V, "Have a Reasoned Commitment to the Values that Sustain a Free Society." Table 1 contains a breakdown of the affective exercises by area, topic, and subtopic for young adults. It also contains the number of exercises in each area and the number of exercises released by NAEP after the first assessment. Some exercises were not released so that they could be used in later assessments in order to compare change and/or stability in attitudes over time.

Tables 2 and 3 contained the results obtained by NAEP for the variables of race and sex. As can be seen in the tables, females performed better than males at all levels except the young adult, and blacks were consistently outperformed by others at all levels.

Table 1

Year Three NAEP Social Studies Affective Exercises by Area, Topic, and Subtopic for Young Adults

	Total	Released
III. Attitudes/General Area	25	19
A. Attitudes/Rights of the First Amendment		
1. Believes in the freedoms of the First Amendment and can justify that belief	12	9
B. Attitudes/The Worth of the Individual	13	10
1. Believes that people should become involved in making decisions that affect their lives	3	2
2. Is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others	2	2
3. Respects the rights and views of others	5	3
4. Believes in the rule of law and can justify that belief	3	3

Note: Adapted from First Social Studies Assessment: An Overview by NAEP. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June, 1974 (Report 03-SS-00), p. 50.

Table 2

Comparison of National Median P-Values for NAEP Sex Categories on Year Three Social Studies Adult Attitude Exercises

Age	Sex: Male	Sex: Female	National Median P-Value
9	77.7	79.3	78.5
13	62.2	65.8	64.0
17	78.1	81.1	79.6
Young Adult	78.1	75.7	76.9

Note: Adapted from Social Studies Technical Report: Summary Volume by NAEP. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975 (Report 03-SS-21), p. 56.

Table 3

Comparison of National Median P-Values for NAEP Race Categories on Year Three Social Studies Adult Attitude Exercises

Age	Sex: Black	Sex: Other	National Median P-Value
9	74.4	79.8	78.5
13	49.1	66.7	64.0
17	69.8	81.4	79.6
Young Adult	63.6	79.3	76.9

Note: Adapted from Social Studies Technical Report: Summary Volume by NAEP. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975 (Report 03-SS-21), p. 56.

Summary of Major Findings

Significant differences between performance of population subgroups occurred on nine of the 19 exercises. Four of these differences were found on exercises dealing with the rights of the First Amendment (RAR02, RAR07, and RAR12A). The remaining eight were found on exercises dealing with the worth of the individual (RAB02, RAB04, RAB10, RAB16, UAB18, and UAB21). Based on the results of the Chi-square analyses and a review of overall performance on the selected NAEP affective exercises, the following summarizes the major findings of this study:

1. Overall, other males from the Central region performed best on the selected affective exercises, followed, in order, by other females, black females, and black males.

2. Black males performed at a lower level than other males. This was true on 13 of the 19 exercises. The differences in performance were significant on two exercises (RAR02, UAB21) indicating that there was a relationship between race and performance on those exercises.

3. Black females performed at a lower level than other females. This was true on 13 of the 19 exercises. The differences in performance were significant on three exercises (RAR02, RAR12A, and UAB21) indicating that there was a relationship between race and performance on these exercises.

4. Black males performed at a lower level than black females. This was found on 12 of the 19 exercises. The dif-

ferences in performance were significant on only one exercise (RAB02). The differences between black males and black females tended, overall to be smaller than the differences between the other groups.

5. Other females performed at a lower level than other males. This was the case on 13 of the 19 exercises. The differences in performance were significant on six of the exercises. On two exercises (RAR07, RAR12A), other males performed significantly better than other females. On four exercises (RAB02, RAB04, and RAB16), other females performed significantly better than other males.

6. Black males, black females, and other females tended to perform better on exercises dealing with the worth of the individual.

7. Other males tended to perform better on exercises dealing with the rights contained in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

8. For blacks, the major factor affecting performance appeared to be race and not sex. The results of the comparisons of performance between black males and black females showed that the differences between the performance of black males and black females were smaller than the differences between the performance of other males and other females.

9. For non-blacks, the major factor affecting performance appeared to be sex and not race. The sex differences between other males and other females were larger than the differences between black males and black females.

Table 4

Summary of Percentage of Correct Responses for Population Subgroups on the Released Affective Exercises

Exercise Number	Exercise Description	Black Males	Other Males	Black Females	Other Females
A. Rights of the First Amendment					
1. Believes in the freedoms of the First Amendment and can justify that belief					
RAR02	Should young citizens write to a public official?	59.1	80.5	61.1	77.6
RAR05	Public criticism of U.S. troops abroad	70.6	85.4	78.3	85.1
UAR06	Freedom of speech and worship	77.3	81.3	80.6	78.6
RAR07	Religious freedom for elected officials	58.8	66.7	47.8	51.5
RAR08	Newspaper's right to criticize public officials	68.8	73.9	71.1	72.3
UAR10	Freedom of the press	70.6	82.9	77.8	82.3
RAR11	Right to assemble in public park	87.0	77.3	69.4	73.4
RAR12A	Freedom to picket rock festival	47.8	65.0	50.1	56.8
RAR12B	Freedom to picket police station	65.2	44.1	52.8	39.0

Table 4 (Continued)

Exercise Number	Exercise Description	Black Males	Other Males	Black Females	Other Females
B.	The worth of the individual				
	1. Believes people should be involved in decisions which affect their lives				
RAB02	Should teenagers decide on courses?	31.3	52.8	82.2	69.7
RAB04	Community control of neighborhood	68.8	61.3	65.2	73.7
	2. Is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others				
RAB09	Reasons for poverty	29.4	23.6	15.6	17.1
RAB10	Removing conditions of poverty	87.5	81.8	45.6	40.7
	3. Respects the rights and views of others				
RAB13	Conformity to peer pressure	90.9	92.4	50.6	91.9
RAB16	Should race influence employment?	88.2	86.3	45.6	92.6
RAB17	Political obligation to minority groups	58.8	76.4	73.9	81.5

Table 4 (Continued)

Exercise Number	Exercise Description	Black Males	Other Males	Black Females	Other Females
4.	Believes in the "Rule of Law" and can justify that belief				
UAR18	Legal protection for all	68.2	75.8	80.6	85.4
UAB19	Legal protection for all	81.3	84.0	84.8	79.6
UAB21	Citizen's responsibility	52.2	96.8	72.0	93.5

Discussion and Conclusions

The Chi-square tests of association, used to test the hypotheses in this study, revealed 12 significant differences on nine of the 19 released affective exercises. Two of the differences occurred when comparisons were made between the performance of black males and other males, and three occurred when comparing the performance of black females and other females. For these five significant differences, it can be assumed that the factor influencing performance was race. On all five differences, race worked to the advantage of non-blacks and to the disadvantage of blacks on the exercises. Of the remaining seven significant differences occurring, one occurred on an exercise on which the performance of black males and black females was compared. The other six significant differences occurred on exercises on which the performance of other males and other females were being compared. For these seven significant differences, the factor related to successful performance on the exercises appeared to be sex.

By examining the results of the Chi-square analyses and the overall performance of the groups, it was determined that performance on the released NAEP affective exercises used in this study was, in part, related to the race and/or sex of the respondent. The following conclusions were drawn:

1. Performance on some of the NAEP affective exercises was influenced by the sex of the respondent. Males (except black males) tended to do better on exercises dealing with the rights of the First Amendment. Females (and black males) tended to do better on exercises dealing with the worth of the individual. Females, overall, were lower in their percentage of correct responses than males.

2. Performance on some of the NAEP affective exercises was influenced by the race of the respondent. Blacks did more poorly than non-blacks on most of the exercises. When comparing the performance of black males and other males, black males performed at a lower level than other males on most of the exercises, and the differences in performance were significant in two of the cases. When comparing the performance of black females and other females, black females did more poorly on most of the exercises and the differences in performance were significant in three cases. The influence of race tended to be more negative for blacks than for non-blacks.

3. The overall effects of race appeared to be greater than the overall effect of sex. The differences between the races were larger than the differences between the sexes. Overall performance on the exercises revealed that non-black males and females did better than black males and females.

4. NAEP's sampling procedure has failed to provide the

types of information needed to fully assess learning and attitudes in a pluralistic society. NAEP has assumed that their sampling procedure has accurately produced a sample that truly reflects the population make up of the total population of the United States for the various age groups assessed. Several problems are related to this assumptions. A major problem with the sample stemmed from the fact that the category "other" contains not only whites but also all other non-black participants in the social studies assessment. Groups such as Chicanos, Native Americans, Asian Americans and Puerto Ricans were included in this category. They were sampled in such small quantities that they did not represent a large enough group to have a separate category. While assessment results have provided information regarding similarities and differences between blacks and all others, it has not provided any data for these other important groups that are included in America's population. Additionally, examination of the data in the study revealed that, for some assessment packages used in the young adult age category, there were as few as 16 black males and 36 black females responding to the exercises contained in the package. In reality, this may not have provided a sample truly reflective of the black population in the Central region, to which the results were generalized.

5. Performance on NAEP's affective exercises may be affected by the values held by the respondent and by the nature of the exercises used to assess attitudes. NAEP has operated on the assumption that it is possible to accurately measure, by means of a paper and pencil test, what respondents would do in real life situations (Taylor & Krakow, 1977). This assumption is particularly questionable when it comes to measuring the affective elements of education. Several have pointed out the difficulties inherent in measuring the affective realm. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that NAEP has implicitly assumed that all Americans possess a common set of values. The large differences in attitudes reflected in the differences in performance between blacks and non-blacks on the exercises used in this study would suggest that this may not be the case. Williams and Gilliard (1974) have pointed out that the different cultural backgrounds and perspectives on their lives in America, may lead non-whites to respond to individual items contained in this type of assessment differently than whites and that the different responses may, in fact, be the logical response for them.

6. Differences in performance between other males and the remaining three population subgroups (black males, black females and other females) on exercises dealing with the worth

of the individual may be related to different attitudes toward the effectiveness of the American system and feelings of political efficacy. The literature reviewed earlier has suggested that blacks and females tended to have lower senses of political efficacy and political trust. Explanations of this phenomenon have centered around socialization, social deprivation and structural impediments to full participation in the system. On exercises measuring the worth of the individual, all population subgroups which would be expected to have lower senses of political efficacy (black males, black females, and other females) than other males tended to perform better than other males did. These strong performances on exercises dealing with the worth of the individual and human rights issues may be, in part, a result of their feelings toward the system as they perceive it and their amount of faith in and commitment to the system as it operates.

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